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ABSTRACT

This article argues that successful implementation of Reading Recovery requires a systematic plan to ensure that everyone at the district level, school level, teacher level, and parent/home level understand the goals and benefits of the program, including school board members, community members, central office administrators, principals, teachers, and parents. It describes how, in the author's Texas school district, they have implemented a Reading Recovery Advisory Board, principal's meetings, School Literacy Teams, and parent awareness sessions as vehicles to accomplish this. The article discusses how each of these groups specifically impacts the success of the Reading Recovery program. In general, it argues that these regular group meetings promote understandings, provide opportunities for continuous dialogue, and refine thinking about the lowest achieving children, whose successes are continually placed before these groups. (SR)

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Building a Network of Support For Successful Implementation.

by Melba Kent

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NETWORKING

Building A Network of Support For Successful Implementation

MELBA KENT, TEACHER LEADER
FORT BEND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
MISSOURI CITY TX

Fort Bend Independent School District became a Reading Recovery site more than four years ago. At the onset, we recognized that a successful implementation model would require a systematic plan not only to select the most well suited schools (Jackson, 1997), but to ensure that everyone at the district level, school level, teacher level, and parent/home level understood the goals and benefits of the program. Board members, community members, central office administrators, principals, teachers, and parents needed to know how Reading Recovery fit with the established literacy goals of the system. In our district, the overall literacy goal for all children is that they will be reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade. Reading Recovery is one intervention program that can indeed help attain this goal.

The biggest threat to a new intervention program occurs immediately after its initial success. Marie Clay (1994) says further that "an innovative program that is getting good results has many supporters in the growth stage. Once it is in place it is taken for granted" (p.139). In recognition of this pitfall, we have instituted a Reading Recovery Advisory Board, principals' meetings, School Literacy Teams, and parent awareness sessions as vehicles for ongoing successful implementation of Reading Recovery within the district. In general, these regular group meetings provide opportunities for continuous dialogue, promote understandings, and refine thinking about the lowest achieving children attaining average reading and writing levels within a short period of time. The successes of Reading Recovery children are constantly placed before these groups in order to change the predominant mindset that these children cannot succeed. In the following paragraphs I will discuss how each of these groups specifically impacts the success of the Reading Recovery program.

Reading Recovery Advisory Board

The purpose of the Reading Recovery Advisory Board is to promote interaction and communication across the entire school district. Input from all levels keeps the Advisory Board focused on the important issues and emphasizes the potential for student achievement. It is particularly important to have active involvement from the business community in order to avoid the many unproven "quick fix" commercial reading programs on the market. The Board is comprised of the Associate Superintendent of Administration, Reading Recovery site coordinator, Language Arts coordinator, Title I Supervisor, teacher leaders, school board members, principals, classroom teachers, Reading Recovery teachers, community representatives, and Reading Recovery parents. It meets twice a year for Board members to review program results, resolve implementation issues, and learn about the positive influence of Reading Recovery on all participants. Meetings generally include reports on program status at the district level as well as the school level. Reading Recovery teachers give overviews of their students and report on former Reading Recovery students as they advance through the grade levels. The meetings conclude with a "Behind-The-Glass" lesson. In this way, board members observe the Reading Recovery process first-hand and see the positive influence it has on individual students (See Figure 1 for a sample Advisory Board agenda).

Principals' Meetings

No program can be truly effective without the support of school principals. What they value and express through their leadership will typically be valued by their staff. Unless each participating school has a supportive principal who understands the Reading Recovery process, the program will never achieve its full potential. Therefore, principals of Reading Recovery schools meet several times throughout the year both individually and as a group with the teacher leaders and site coordinator. These meetings are scheduled at the beginning of the school year so they can be included on the school calendar. Group meetings provide a forum to discuss program results at the school level and to provide administrative support for Reading Recovery teachers and students. Challenges that arise as a result of program implementation include ensuring that daily lessons occur for all students, seeking solutions for student and/or teacher absenteeism, and promoting parental support. The site coordinator and teacher leaders meet individually with each principal twice a year to offer assistance. These meetings typically involve discussions of goals, staffing, budgeting, additional training, and the school's annual report.

School Literacy Teams

In *Reading Recovery: A Guidebook For Teachers In Training*, Clay tells us to "adopt a watch-dog role for ex-Reading Recovery children in the school" and check on their progress for a three year period (1995, p. 96). School Literacy Teams at each of the sixteen Reading Recovery schools in our district have been a powerful mechanism for monitoring the progress of current Reading Recovery students, former Reading

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Recovery students who have been referred for long term services, and students who have advanced through the grade levels. In our fourth year of implementation, the School Literacy Team has evolved to include the monitoring of all students who are having reading problems.

School Literacy Teams meet every six weeks with the meeting dates scheduled on each school's calendar at the beginning of the year. Members of each team include Reading Recovery teachers, first grade teachers, the principal, counselor, speech teacher, resource teacher, a kindergarten teacher, an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher, and depending on the number of years since implementation, representatives from the second, third, and fourth grade (See Figure 2 for a sample agenda).

Every meeting begins with a discussion about the progress of the students and their successes. All Reading Recovery teachers report on their students' writing and text reading using the School Literacy Team progress chart which is distributed to each team member (See Figure 3). Recognizing that daily lessons are critical to student success, Reading Recovery teachers report the number of days the students miss lessons. Overall classroom performance is also discussed in order to better understand how much of the Reading Recovery progress is transferred to the classroom. It is most helpful when Reading Recovery teachers talk with classroom teachers about insights, questions, and concerns regarding each Reading Recovery student. If progress is not being observed in the classroom and/or

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FORT BEND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
READING RECOVERY® ADVISORY BOARD
DECEMBER 11, 1997

I wanted to let you know how much I appreciate all your effort in the Reading Recovery program in helping Brandon learn how to read. I can tell a major improvement in his reading has been accomplished. He really enjoys it! Thanks again.

Keri Rostek, Parent, Highlands Elementary, November 19, 1997

Welcome And Introductions
Mary Jackson, Director of Special Programs

Program Status
Participating Schools 1997-1998
Melba Kent, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader
Student Performance
First Grade - Bonnie Manley, Townewest Elementary
Second, Third, and Fourth Grades - Carolyn Fall, Glover Elementary
District-Wide Results From 1994 to 1997
Rosetta Ford, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader

Staff Development Accomplishments
Academics 2000 Grants
Melba Kent, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader
School Literacy Teams
Jeremy Frazier, First Grade Teacher, Lexington Creek Elementary
HCDE Presentation/TASB Conference
Jane Clarke, Board of Trustees, President

Looking To The Future
Our Vision For Further Implementation
Mary Jackson, Director of Special Programs
Descubriendo La Lectura
Kathryne Salinas, Teacher Leader In-Training

Behind The Glass Lesson
Carolyn Fall and David Quintero

Figure 1

Fort Bend ISD
Reading Recovery® School Literacy Team

Settlers Way Elementary School
Orientation Meeting
August 25, 1997

I have learned that quality control of an intervention to recover failing children requires that the teacher is a member of a ***school team*** *which is mounting the intervention to reduce reading difficulties in that school.*
Clay, *Early Detection of Reading Difficulties*, p.4

- Introduction of Team Members
- Orientation
  - Why Did Settlers Way Choose Reading Recovery? Expectations?
  - Purpose of team
  - Philosophy of Reading Recovery - Central Ideas
  - Choosing Students
  - Scheduling Lessons - RR is in addition to good classroom instruction.
- Successful Implementation - What Does It Take?
  - Checklist For RR Implementation
- Looking Ahead
  - Parent Orientation - When?
  - Faculty Orientation - When?
  - Observation Of Reading Recovery Lessons by School Literacy Team Members
  - Schedule of School Literacy Meetings
- Questions/Concerns
- A Literacy Poem

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Reading Recovery sessions, then the team brainstorms ways to help the student. In one instance, the Reading Recovery teacher and classroom teacher scheduled times for each to observe the student in both settings. In another example, a fifth grade buddy reader was assigned to a student who was not reading at home each night.

The meeting continues with a discussion about referrable children, discontinued Reading Recovery students, and those former Reading Recovery students in second, third and fourth grade. Some school teams have assigned each member to report on one child. In this way, these students have an advocate who follows them throughout their elementary school years. If needed, the team establishes a plan for those students who need extra help.

All team members observe a Reading Recovery lesson at the beginning of the year and participate in writing the annual report. The School Literacy Team also schedules and plans parent awareness sessions and faculty awareness sessions for the fall and spring of each year. These sessions are designed to inform both groups about the program's "purposes, procedures, and outcomes" (Clay, 1994, p.134).

One unexpected by-product of the School Literacy Team is that it has served as a catalyst for change in the classroom. Teachers have requested information on how to use running records to monitor their students' progress. Some schools have also begun to see the value of using leveled texts and have purchased them for the classrooms.

According to Clay (1985), "quality control of an intervention to recover failing children requires that the teacher is a member of a school team which is mounting the intervention to reduce reading difficulties in that school" (page 4). School Literacy Teams at each of the sixteen Reading Recovery schools have been a powerful support in sustaining a quality program. Each school team differs in its composition and faces its own specific issues. However, each team has in common the desire to provide the best intervention program possible for every student having difficulties learning to read. Through the team problem-solving process, all team members take responsibility for each child's success or failure.

Parent Awareness Sessions

In an effort to maximize literacy support for Reading Recovery students, parent meetings are held in the Fall and Spring at each of the Reading Recovery schools. At these meetings, parents learn about the program and how they can help their child at home. Teachers give an overview of the Observation Survey and the lesson components as well as offer suggestions for how to use appropriate questioning and prompting techniques in order to reinforce good reading. Parents are invited to schedule a time to observe a Reading Recovery lesson as well.

Organized For Continued Success

The Reading Recovery program in Fort Bend ISD recognizes that our audiences are constantly changing. This means we must continually inform the public about Reading Recovery's "purposes, procedures, and outcomes" (Clay, 1994, p. 134). It is important to revisit the goals and benefits of Reading Recovery so that all participants understand why our district instituted the program. Through the Reading Recovery Advisory Board, communication lines are laid to coordinate the program district-wide. Regularly scheduled individual and group meetings with the principals of participating schools provide a format to address their concerns and earn their support. The School Literacy Team is the backbone of our effort to educate and involve the administrators, teachers, parents, and community.

Fort Bend ISD
Reading Recovery® School Literacy Team

Glover Elementary School
Second Six Weeks
October 21, 1997

Exceptions are not made for children of lower intelligence, for second-language children, for children with low language skills, for children with poor motor coordination, for children who seem immature, for children who score poorly on readiness measures, or for children who have already been categorized by someone else as learning disabled.

RRCNA Guidelines and Standards

- How Are Our Students Doing?
  - Students Being Served - Progress Chart and Classroom Performance
  - Students Needing Service
  - Former RR Students - Second, Third, and Fourth Graders
- The Reading Recovery/Early Literacy Conference
  - Highlights From Sessions
  - Plans for next year. How can we get School Literacy Team members to attend?
- Goals For The Year
  - Observation of RR Lessons by School Literacy Team Members
  - Faculty Orientation
  - Readers, Writers, and Parents Workshop - How is it going?
  - Effective Early Literacy Coaching - Marlys Sloup
- New Moon

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It has become a vehicle for changes in the classroom environment and has evolved to deal with all children with reading problems. Because parental support and involvement enhances a child's reading success, training sessions are conducted regularly to equip the parents with the skills and knowledge to be more supportive at home. Through the systematic plan of engaging all stakeholders, we have established a strong network of support that will ensure that Reading Recovery remains fundamental to achieving the district's reading goals.

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